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Issue 48 June 1994

Celebrating memories in Slana

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Barbara Crane and her son, Cody, curl up behind the quilt she made to commemorate the history of their land claims at Slana.

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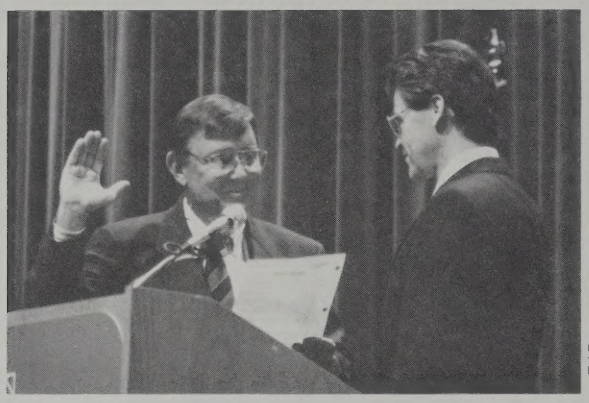
New State Director sworn in for BLM-Alaska



Ed Bovy

Assistant Secretary of the Interior Bob Armstrong swears in Tom Allen as the new State Director for BLM-Alaska

Tom Allen has been named State Director of BLM-Alaska by BLM's acting national Director Mike Dombeck. Allen most recently served as Assistant Director for Management Services in Washington, D.C., where he managed budget and finance, administrative services, automation, evaluations and management analysis.

As State Director, Allen will supervise management of wildlife habitat, recreation, cultural resources, hiking and camping, wild and scenic river management, mineral development, and federal oil and gas leasing. He will also be in charge of the Alaska Fire Service and oversight of the trans-Alaska pipeline. One of Allen's top priorities will be to continue the transfer of land from federal ownership to Alaska Natives and the state.

BLM-Alaska has a work force of about 900 people and a budget of more than $60 million.

Allen, 53, is a native of Wisconsin. He holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Forestry from the University of Montana. He began his BLM career in Nevada, and has served in BLM offices in California, Arizona and Washington D.C.

In 1987 Allen was honored with the Department of the Interior Meritorious Service Award, and in 1991 he received a Presidential Rank Award for excellence in executive management.

Allen is an active outdoors person and enjoys hiking, motorcycle riding and jazz. He is married, with five grown children.

RAPS program gears up for summer

You don't have to convince Jon Deininger, former Bureau of Land Management VISTA volunteer, of the value of the Resource Apprenticeship Program for Students. As lead coordinator for the RAPS program in BLM-Alaska, Deininger has seen firsthand what RAPS can do for rural Native students.

Deininger left Wisconsin to come to work at BLM-Alaska in 1993 as a VISTA volunteer. Volunteers in Service to America is a full-time, yearlong volunteer program. VISTAs are assigned to local sponsors, which may be public agencies or private, nonprofit agencies.

When Deininger's year as a VISTA was up, he jumped at an opportunity to continue his work with the RAPS program, along with Bob Silverman, the new VISTA on board. "The Environmental Careers Organization contracted for me to continue to work at the BLM through November of this year. They recognized that RAPS is one program that can really make a difference to young people."

RAPS students learn about careers in natural resources by working with a variety of resource professionals from state and federal agencies, including surveyors, archaeologists, park rangers, computer specialists, botanists and wildlife biologists. The natural resource professionals serve as mentors and informal career guidance counselors for RAPS students. They also support progress in each of the student's self-guided educational handbooks.

"We should have about 50 students state-wide this year," says Deininger. "Last year we had 59 students. Right now, about 40 are definite, and of those, eight are being hosted by the BLM.

"So far, for this summer we are getting new funding from Koniag Inc.; Selawik, IRA; Maniilaq Manpower; and Exxon. We're going with a private nonprofit agency for the first time this year—the Northern Alaskan Environmental Center. To date, we have funds committed close to $120,000; our goal is $150,000."

VISTA volunteers such as Deininger and Bob Silverman raise funds for all of the students' expenses, which include stipends, travel, food and lodging. Financial support for the program comes from Native organizations, private industry, the state, and foundations. RAPS staff provide support and try to visit each apprenticeship site during the summer. RAPS devotes 100% of generated funds to student apprentices, and all program administrative costs are covered by VISTA and BLM.

Deininger says fund raising is a necessary part of being a RAPS coordinator, "but the goal is not so much the money as trying to give more students a chance at an apprenticeship. Finding the money is a necessary reality, but the real measure of success is the number of students that get to participate. We're also concerned with offering quality apprenticeships rather than just going for as many students as possible."

RAPS continually faces challenges, Deininger says. "We had some funding cuts this year. Also, agencies are streamlining and lots of people are retiring so we lost some resource professional positions as well. We really appreciate our long-term partners like the National Park Service, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. They've been with the RAPS since 1988."

—Janet Malone

Quilt celebrates Slana settlers' journey home

In September, 1983, two parcels of land totalling 10,250 acres were opened by the BLM to settlement in an area called Slana. Located 250 miles northeast of Anchorage, Slana had a small population already living near the settlement areas.

Even so, there was no local government, school, police or fire protection, nor were there nearby medical or commercial facilities. BLM did not guarantee overland access to settlement claims. Winter conditions could be extreme, with minus-50° temperatures, and 74 inches of snow per season considered average. Much of the land was boggy, covered by ridges and valleys.

Still, they came. Settlers seeking 5-acre homesites, headquarters sites, and 80-acre trade and manufacturing sites flocked to Slana for the next three years until 1986, when the repeal of the federal settlement laws went into effect and the area was closed to new settlers.

Some quickly staked claim boundaries on easily accessible parcels. Others navigated rivers or hiked for miles to find a desirable spot. All had to follow the legal requirements specific to their type of claim, including periods of residency and/or use of the land.

There were those who met the requirements, received title, and departed, never to return. Others invested varying amounts of time and effort, yet were unable to fulfill all the necessary requirements. And there were those few who made Slana a permanent home.

BLM records indicate over 800 filings were received, with just over a hundred claimants receiving patents to a cumulative total of approximately 600 acres of land. A few dozen claims still await final adjudication.

Do you want to hear the romantic version?" teased Barbara Crane, when asked about the history of her land claim in Slana.

"I came up from where I was living in Colorado in June of 1986 to visit my sister, who was working on a fire crew. I got off the plane, looked around and just said—wow!"

Robert Crane was a member of that same fire crew. He and Barbara hit it off, and were married only weeks later at the Talkeetna Bluegrass Festival. "We just knew," explained Barbara.

Although they spent their honeymoon in a tent, by late fall the couple set up housekeeping in Slana, where Robert had staked a claim for a 5-acre homesite and built a cozy little cabin. Barbara also filed a claim for a headquarters site, in order to start Birch Nole Forestry Services. The company has constructed trails, drilled wells, milled logs, and even had a U.S. Forest Service contract to improve moose browse habitat.

Lately, Barbara's Midnight Mountain Herb and Tea Company has become the more active venture, utilizing the chamomile, coltsfoot and fireweed that grow abundantly in the area. Barbara grows other herbs in a greenhouse, where she dries the herbs and flowers, then prepares them for packaging.

The enterprises and improvements the Cranes made to their claims resulted in the issuance of patents from the BLM. Robert received title to his homesite in May of 1989, and Barbara received title to her headquarters site in April of 1993.

To mark the achievements, Barbara hit on the idea of making a quilt with individual squares commemorating the events and people that were part of their efforts.

"I asked everyone, no matter how small a part they played, to draw something on a quilt square for me," she said.

She sent quilt squares to Alaska State Office land law examiner Lori FitzSimons and Glennallen District Office realty specialist David Mushovic. Mushovic, who performed the field examinations of both Crane claims, drew a BLM triangle logo. FitzSimons, who adjudicated the claims, came up with a picture of a BLM casefile, complete with Barbara's original serial number.

"AA-60547," FitzSimons recalled. "When I've worked with one for so long, it just stays in my head."

Barbara can tell a story about each and every panel. Her eyes light up as she pulls out a square. "My husband drew this one. It's five sandhill cranes—one each for him, me, Cody, Amanda and Wrangle. We're five Cranes!"

There are still many projects waiting up at Slana. A second greenhouse someday, maybe a barn, more houses for the mosquito-munching bats and swallows the family tries to encourage as neighbors ... there's always work to do.

—KJ Mushovic

Editor's note: There are no longer any federal lands in Alaska available for homesteading. All federal land programs relating to homesteading, homesites, headquarters sites, or trade and manufacturing sites within the State of Alaska expired in 1986, as a result of the Federal Public Lands Policy Management Act of 1976. With the act, Congress directed the government to manage the remaining public lands for long-term retention.

The State of Alaska has land available under several programs, but to be eligible you must be a resident of Alaska for one year. Non-residents can purchase land through real estate agencies or private parties.

If you would like to speak to someone about State lands, the phone number is (907) 762-2261 (Public Inquiries).

Pio Point

Students uncover Athabaskan history at 3,700-year-old site

Eric Dillingham

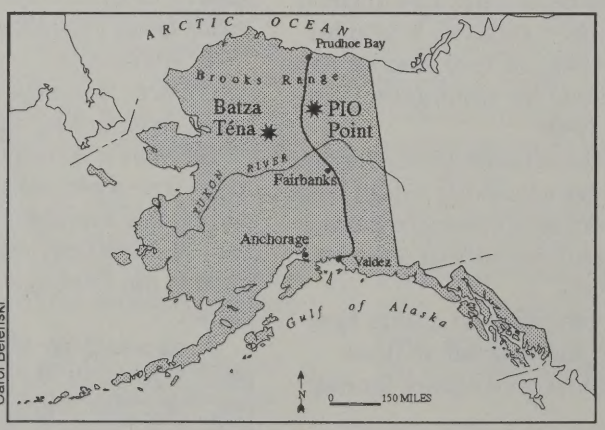
Looking north toward Grayling Lake, BLM volunteers Laura Hartman and Robyn Meyer get a better look at the valley terrain as they survey the area for artifacts.

Eric Dillingham scraped the surface of the ground with his trowel, watching carefully for telltale signs of an earlier people. The constant hum of mosquitoes surrounding him rarely wavered despite an occasional light breeze or a gentle flap of the green tarp that sheltered the workers from the summer sun.

An excited call from a co-worker at another square brought him to his feet. "I found another scraper," shouted Laura Hartman, a volunteer helping with the archaeological excavation. Everyone clustered around her to see the prize that had drawn them to northern Alaska to spend four weeks on their knees in the middle of nowhere.

The workers were all volunteers, and all students at the University of Alaska. Dillingham, a cooperative education student, was working on his master's degree project. The others—Warren Vaupel, Laura Hartman and Robyn Meyer from the Fairbanks campus, and John Vickery from the Anchorage campus—were assisting him.

"Finding 23 flint and obsidian hide scrapers along with arrowhead and spearhead points suggests that the people were working hides at the site, so it was possibly a camp site."
—Eric Dillingham



Carol Belenski

The 3,700-year-old archaeological site where they were working is called Pio Point. It is about 50 miles south of the Brooks Range, less than a mile off the Dalton Highway. The site was discovered in 1974 by archaeologists doing clearances for the trans-Alaska oil pipeline right-of-way.

"Pio Point is on a 100-foot-high knob at the end of a glacial moraine," Dillingham said. "It is south of Coldfoot and Grayling Lake in a hilly area with lots of deep, glacial canyons. There, at the confluence of Grayling Creek and the Jim River, you have an almost 360-degree view of the surrounding terrain."

The main focus of Dillingham's project is to define different occupations at the site from 4,000 to 1,000 years ago, and to find clues to the prehistory of the Athabaskan people.

He thinks the site was used primarily by hunters. "Finding 23 flint and obsidian hide scrapers along with arrowhead and spearhead points suggests that the people were working hides at the site, so it was possibly a camp site."

"Even though the artifacts were only about 8 to 10 centimeters under the surface, they were scattered in such a way that you could generally tell one occupation from another," Dillingham said. "We found artifacts in six different areas. In one location they seemed to be of mixed ages, but artifacts in five localities were not mixed and so were more easily dated."

Hearths found by the team have yielded spearhead or arrowhead points and a variety of scraping tools. "One hearth had 26 micro blades and a projectile point with unique characteristics," Dillingham added. "Even though people have

found that type of point in arctic sites before, there was never enough associated organic material to run a radiocarbon test. This time I found enough charcoal around the point to have the test done. That style of point is now established to be about 2,800 years old."

One purpose of Dillingham's project is to expand the use of obsidian hydration as a dating technique. The hydration process helps date artifacts made of obsidian, a volcanic glass. The technique measures the amount of moisture a piece of obsidian has absorbed from its suroundings since it was first chipped. How fast it absorbs water depends on the local soil temperature and the chemical composition of the obsidian. The Pio Point artifacts were identified as coming from the Batza Tena obsidian source 100 miles away.

When Dillingham turns in his master's degree project, the Pio Point artifact collection will be given to the University of Alaska Museum on the Fairbanks campus for permanent storage.

—Sharon Durgan Wilson

Life in Camp

Dillingham and his crew spent four weeks camped in a gravel pit near the Dalton Highway where temperatures ranged from 40 to 90 degrees Fahrenheit.

"We had tons of mosquitoes," he said. "Each day we hiked a third of a mile through the woods and crossed Grayling Creek to reach the site. Crossing during high water was rough, and we almost got trapped on our last day after a heavy rain."

During their stay they watched a pair of foxes and their four fox kits, who lived in a den at the end of the gravel pit. "The kits would tumble down the embankment and play around while the parents watched, patiently refereeing their fights," Dillingham said. "It was a real circus.

"Things got exciting one evening when Warren opened the back end of his tent and saw a wolf looking in. Of course, when he cried, 'Wolf!' No one believed him," Dillingham said with a laugh, "but the wolf wandered around about 10 minutes, visited every tent, sniffed at our camp equipment and finally wandered off.

"This was a good working group. Most of them knew each other before the project, and they were serious about doing a good job."

ANHAs and APLICs

Organizations, as well as people, can often accomplish more as part of team than they can working on their own. From time to time Frontiers will showcase some of the ways BLM increases its effectiveness by cooperating with other organizations. —editor

As you travel throughout Alaska on vacation this summer, you may visit information centers at various parks or forests. Chances are there will be a bookstore there operated by the **Alaska Natural History Association**. ANHA is a nonprofit organization dedicated to enhancing the public understanding and conservation of Alaska's natural, cultural and historical resources by working in cooperation with land management agencies and other educational organizations throughout Alaska. Similar associations have been operating in the continental U. S. for more than 50 years but Alaska's association is more extensive in that virtually all state and federal land managing agencies are served. Since 1959, ANHA's staff, volunteer board of directors and cooperating partners carry out the association's goals by:

- operating bookstores in more than 30 locations in Alaska
- publishing books, newspapers and educational material about Alaska natural resources
- donating funds to educational and scientific programs of Alaska parks, forests, refuges and public lands visitor centers
- funding special events, research and exhibits

In 1993 ANHA donated more than $530,000 in educational aid to six cooperating state and federal agencies.

ANHA branches benefiting BLM are located in the public services room in the Anchorage Federal Building and at the Coldfoot Interagency Visitor Center on the Dalton Highway.

In 1980 the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act authorized the establishment of four interagency information/education centers in Alaska. Today three **Alaska Public Lands Information Centers**, or APLICs, are up and running in downtown Fairbanks, Anchorage and Tok. The fourth center is under construction in Ketchikan and is expected to be open in 1995 or 1996.

APLICs are run by a skilled staff who can provide "one stop shopping" for information on recreational opportunities on public lands, regardless of which state or federal agency manages the land. The public benefits because they can get all the information they need with just one contact, and the agencies benefit by reaching people who otherwise wouldn't have the time to seek them out. It's a unique experiment that is so successful that the centers are often used to capacity.

During the summer the centers assist walk-in visitors wanting help to plan an Alaskan adventure, make a reservation for a Forest Service cabin, buy a state parks pass, or attend a special lecture or film. During the winter, the permanent staff is busy presenting natural resource programs to local school groups or mailing information to people planning trips.

Representatives from the eight cooperating state and federal agencies, including BLM, meet periodically to facilitate the centers' management and goals, and discuss other ways to cooperate on projects of mutual interest.

—Ed Bovy

Trustee tallies up the townsites and the memories as program draws to a close

The federal Townsite Program began with the Act of March 3, 1891, which set up a method to divide and dispose of parcels of public lands as townsites.

To establish a townsite, a group of residents filed a petition with the Interior Department. The petition asked that a Trustee be appointed. The Townsite Trustee consulted with the village council and prepared a plan of survey. After the resulting plat was officially approved, the Trustee took applications for deeds from individual residents.

Assuming they meet legal requirements, the trustee awards deeds to each person's property and collects (from non-Natives only) a pro rata share of the survey cost. The monies collected for trustee deeds are spent in the townsite for improvements and recording fees. Any leftover lots are deeded to the incorporated townsite.

The BLM gives title to the townsite to the Trustee, who in turn issues deeds to qualified applicants. After all deeds are issued and funds are disposed of, the townsite is closed and all of the original records are transferred to the National Archives-Alaska Region.

Martin Hansen, BLM-Alaska's Townsite Trustee, knew 40-some people from the International Right-of-Way Association had shown up to hear his speech, but when the room is warm and people have just finished lunch, it doesn't hurt to have a little insurance.

"I had a raffle contest," says Hansen, "to see who could guess which townsite in Alaska was first patented to a Townsite Trustee. (The answer is Juneau. Nome was the second, and the third was Wrangell). The speech was after lunch and I wanted a way to keep people interested. Half the money taken in by raffle ticket sales was given as prize money and the other half went to the IRWA.

"I really wanted to speak to the IRWA about the Alaska's Townsite Trustee Program. A lot of people, including IRWA members, phone up—people from title companies, right-of-way agents, attorneys, state and local governments, state and local land managers. I wanted to explain the program and tell them where to get information about townsites when there isn't a Townsite Trustee anymore." The Townsite program is expected to be closed at the end of the year.

"To be a Townsite Trustee, you have to be patient," says Hansen. "You have places that have had problems with conflicting applications. It's my job to come up with a solution.

"One of the most interesting parts of this job is the people. The farther away you get from Anchorage, the more trusting people are. I explain everything, and then we go next door and get witnesses, and I explain everything to them.

"I go on about 12 trips a year. I spent an unscheduled night in the school at Shaktoolik. It was so cold that the plane wouldn't start. When I came back, I filled out a requisition and got cold-weather boots—it's been warm ever since. It's okay because those bunny boots are just an awful thing to haul around."

Hansen says his job doesn't come with hotel accommodations. "Not a lot of people come into these villages—just people from adjoining villages who are coming to visit relatives or friends. These are small towns—100 people, 200 people some of them. I usually end up sleeping on the floor in the city offices. I haven't slept in any of the jails, yet," Hansen chuckles.

"I bring my own food and do my own cooking. Sometimes I bring a hot plate.

"I spent a lot of time at the Bethel airport waiting to see if the planes are going to fly. Once you get out of the jet, you are completely weather-dependent," Hansen says. "I see lots of eagles and caribou—I go to some pretty desolate places."

Hansen says that of the 185 trustee townsites, 17 are still open. An open townsite means the trustee has not yet issued deeds for all the lands held in trust. Once all the lands have been deeded, the townsite is closed.

"After the townsite is closed," says Hansen, "we send a check to the city if it is incorporated or to the Village Council or IRA. If it isn't incorporated and there is no Council or IRA, we give it to the community for projects that are beneficial to the residents. Only two have money in the account. The rest have lands, or lands and money. A few communities have thousands of dollars in the account but aren't spending it."

Hansen says he expects to have the remaining townsites closed this year except for a few with unique legal problems.

—Janet Malone

BLM prepares for ecosystem management

Former BLM-Alaska State Director, Edward F. Spang is tackling the next chapter in his long history with the BLM. Mike Dombeck, BLM's acting national Director named Spang as his special assistant to work on streamlining field offices. From his Anchorage office, Spang will work with BLM state offices in the west and with headquarters in Washington, D.C., to help redesign BLM's agency structure to meet ecosystem management goals.

Spang, who is originally from Lame Deer, Montana, earned a Bachelor of Science degree in range management from Montana State University at Bozeman.

During Spang's 40 years with the BLM, he has been a range conservationist, range manager, and assistant district manager, as well as a BLM state director for both Alaska and Nevada. His career has included posts at Washington, D.C., Montana, Oregon and Arizona. Spang also worked in Nigeria with U.S. Agency for International Development.

Spang is known for his careful and long-term approach to management. "My philosophy has always been not to manage on a personal basis, but on the basis of the mission. Whatever you do should be done up front. To me, the most important thing is to have credibility."

In Alaska, Spang encouraged the Resource Apprenticeship Program for Students, helping it to gain nationwide support. RAPS is an interagency partnership designed to create natural resource apprenticeships for Alaska youth. The program's beneficiaries are primarily rural Alaska Natives. The BLM-Alaska RAPS wrote successful grant proposals which provided funds for U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service, University of Alaska and the State Department of Natural Resources.

—Janet Malone

On Deadly Ground—Seagal movie filmed on BLM land

Do you like to linger in the theater and watch movie credits roll by? If you do, you'll notice that the recently released action movie, *On Deadly Ground*, includes a credit to the Bureau of Land Management-Glennallen District. A BLM airstrip on the Worthington glacier was used for several days in May, 1993, during the aerial filming of scenes in the Thompson pass area. Aerial photography was taken of other BLM-managed lands north of Glennallen.

The film was directed by and stars Steven Seagal, well-known for his performances in several action and martial arts roles. The fictional plot has Seagal defending the Alaskan environment from an unscrupulous oil company.

On a sunny day last May, Glennallen District realty specialist David Mushovic performed a compliance check on the airstrip to ensure that refueling operations were being carried out according to stipulations in a permit issued to Warner Brothers Pictures. Seagal was at the airstrip at the time, setting up shots with the pilots of two helicopters equipped with side-mount movie cameras.

"Seagal came up to me, read my uniform patches, and asked me 'Who is the Bureau of Land Management?'," recalled Mushovic. "I explained who I was, and that I was there checking on compliance with the permit BLM had issued. He wanted to know more about BLM, so I gave him some background on the agency and our mission, and his response was, 'Oh, you're the good guys—you protect the environment!' I told him we do like to think of ourselves as good guys!"

Mushovic noted that Seagal was especially interested in learning about BLM rangers. Later, Mushovic asked Seagal for permission to take photographs at the set of a village scene created nearby on State-owned land. "He appreciated the fact that I asked first—he said that most people don't." Seagal then enlisted one of his assistants to take some photographs of Mushovic and himself.

Realty specialist Dave Mushovic stands next to director and actor Steven Seagal.

Several movies and commercials have been filmed on BLM lands in the Glennallen District, but filming here usually involves little-known actors or stand-ins in for stars.

"I thought I might see some of the movie activity while I was there, but I didn't expect to talk with him," said Mushovic of his chance meeting with Seagal. "Now, I'm hoping to get into Anchorage and see how the movie turned out!"

—KJ Mushovic

frontier flashes

The Mesa Site, located 150 miles north of the Arctic Circle on a remote 200-foot-high tundra plateau, was given protective status for the next 20 years to allow further study. The 11,700-year-old archaeological site is the first well-documented Paleoindian site to be found in the North American arctic.

The BLM's Arctic District requested that two square miles of undeveloped public lands be withdrawn to protect the archaeological, historical and cultural resource integrity of the Mesa Site. Archaeologists expect to find more sites in the river valleys surrounding the mesa.

The site has raised intriguing new questions about the first Americans and challenges accepted theories about thier arrival in the New World.

At the end of the 20-year withdrawal, BLM will evaluate the need to extend the time.

All of the materials found at the site, including lance points, stone tools and hearth materials, are related to hunting activities.

Three firefighters from Russia are working with Alaska firefighters in Fairbanks for two months this summer under an exchange program between Alaska Fire Service and the National Aerial Forest Fire Protection Service in Russia.

Two Russian smokejumpers—Igor Karmazhin from the Primorskaya Fire Center in Vladivostok, and Andrei Kievskiy, from the Amurskaya Fire Center in Blagoveschensk—arrived May 23, and have been training and jumping with Alaska smokejumpers.

Alexsander Pronin, deputy chief of the Magadan Fire Center in Magadan, arrived June 10 to review aircraft operations, dispatch, fuel stations, contracting and other AFS functions.

The visit is part of continuing exchange program. In 1992, five top managers of the Russian fire service visited AFS facilities. Last year, five AFS representatives visited firefighting facilities in Russia.

The Alaska Fire Service sent smokejumpers, hotshot crews and dispatchers to help battle fires in the Lower 48 on June 28. Two 20-member hotshot crews were dispatched to Utah and Colorado where hot, dry conditions have resulted in large fires. Six dispatchers were sent to help with logistics.

Fire activity in Alaska has slowed down since early June, when a band of thunderstorms across the Interior started 17 wildfires. More than 1,300 lightening strikes were reported in an arc stretching from north of Fairbanks to the Bering Sea. Ten other lightening-caused fires had been reported earlier in the week.

About 65 smokejumpers and the Northstar Fire Crew remain at AFS. AFS and the Division of Forestry maintain about 73 emergency firefighter crews in communities around the state.

The Alaska Interagency Fire Coordination Center says 341 fires so far this year have burned a total of 144,000 acres.

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